



Business

A silhouette of a person with their arms raised, pointing upwards, set against a dark background with a bright light source from above. Several thin, orange, curved lines swirl around the person, creating a sense of motion and orbit. The lines start from the top left, curve around the person's head, and then sweep down and to the right, ending near the bottom right of the frame.

How to **orchestrate CX strategy and implementation**

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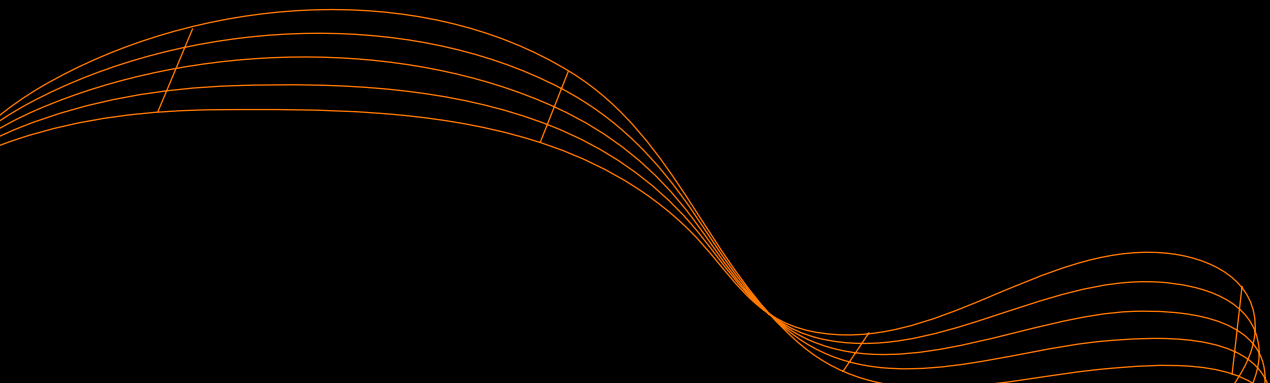
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Introduction

An orchestra in full flow may seem effortless, but achieving such harmony requires years of training and weeks of rehearsal. Similarly, a great customer experience is so frictionless that you can almost fail to notice it, but all the moving parts behind it are carefully integrated to make this possible. Here, we explain why a customer-centric mindset is necessary to eliminate the bad experiences that undermine customer loyalty and examine the different elements you need to orchestrate to deliver great CX.

Imagine you are taking a train to a meeting. You show your e-ticket at the barrier and enter the train. You've pre-booked a seat with a table, so you get out your laptop and log on to the wi-fi. It's early morning so you grab a complimentary coffee from the trolley service and settle down to work. You arrive at your destination two hours later and get a cab to the meeting venue. Someone asks you how the journey was. "Fine," is all you say, but in the back of your head, you've made a note to use the same train for your next meeting.

Now imagine the same journey on a different train. There is no e-ticket facility, so you wait in line to show a paper print-out to a guard. You were unable to pre-book a seat, so you are in a cramped position with your laptop jammed against the seat in front. You are trying to work but the wi-fi keeps dropping out. A signal failure delays the train and makes you late for your meeting. Someone asks you how the journey was, and you say, "terrible," and then launch into a rant about the poor service. "Next time," you think, "I'm going to drive".



Digital CX is no different. A good experience is almost invisible to the customer. Buying online with PayPal is a great example of what we mean: once you've selected an item, you click on the PayPal button, log into your account, and authenticate using your phone. It's an experience so slick you barely notice it. Imagine doing the same thing without something like PayPal – it would be a cumbersome manual process subject to miskeying and, particularly if you are unfamiliar with the vendor, no guarantee your financial information won't be misused.



The customer-centric mindset

The great truism about CX is that people only notice the experience when it goes wrong – and they are far more willing to talk about bad experiences than good ones. Taking the train example above, you are more likely to take to social media to moan about the poor service than to praise the good one, and while happy customers will share that good news with 4-6 people, a dissatisfied customer will tell between 9-15 people about their experience. Most worryingly of all, you will probably never learn the true cost of those bad experiences as 96% of unhappy customers don't complain: they will simply never use your service again.

So, the first step to delivering great CX is to eliminate those bad experiences. And that means adopting a customer-centric mindset. In the positive train example above, the operator has put itself in the shoes of the customer and imagined the journey from their perspective: it has analysed every touchstone – from the ticketing and reservation system to reliable wi-fi and a free caffeine shot – and identified and removed any possible point of friction.

Equally, PayPal understands its customers' unwillingness to manually input personal details and their disinclination to hand over financial information to a retailer they may not trust. To top it all, if you need to complain about any transaction made with PayPal, their aftercare is exemplary.

This willingness to put the customer at the heart of service design and delivery is the hallmark of customer-centricity. The business case for these frictionless experiences is very simple:



70% of customers say they would pay more to receive a convenient experience, and Accenture found that customer-centric companies achieve **3.5 times the revenue growth** of competitors with a more traditional mindset.

The customer-centric organisation

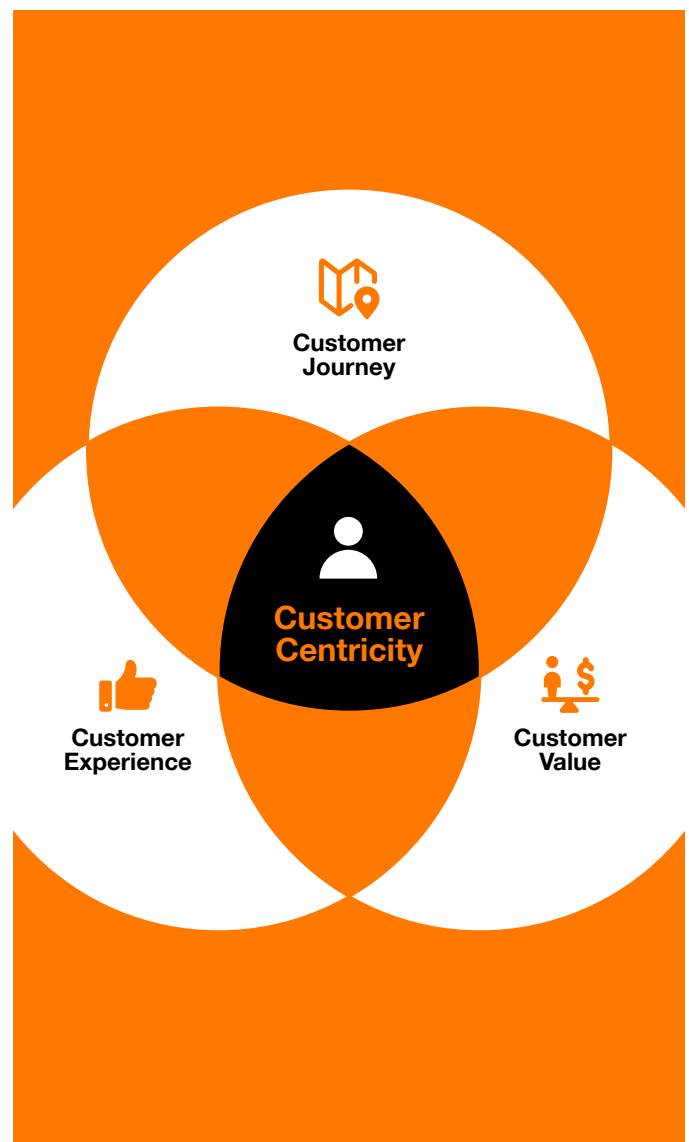
The majority of businesses would claim that they are customer-centric. However, only a minority of their customers would agree. This is the CX perception gap first identified by Bain almost 20 years ago: it found that, while 80% of companies believed they delivered “a superior experience,” only 8% of their customers agreed with them – and recent research doesn’t suggest that things have improved much since then: 54% of US consumers say the customer experience at most companies needs to be improved.

Many organisations also confuse a customer-driven culture for genuine customer-centricity. Customer-driven companies commendably strive to understand the consumer – but they aim to figure out what to sell to them, an inside-out approach in which the customer is the object of their efforts. Customer-centricity is an outside-in approach in which the customer is the subject of all corporate activity. So, put yourself in your customers’ shoes and ask yourself if your organisation is truly as customer-centric as it claims to be.

To implement a customer-centric culture, you need to consider the customer in three different dimensions: the customer experience, the customer journey; and the customer value (see diagram opposite).

- An evaluation of the customer’s experience of your product or service will inform leadership strategies and the development of metrics that will drive customer-centric behaviours across the organisation.
- An analysis of the customer journey will provide feedback that will inform continuous improvement and empower front-line staff to make the right interventions at the right time.
- Understanding the value the customer ultimately derives from their interactions with your company will also inform metrics and front-line interventions.

But, behind each of these interactions is a hugely complex data ecosystem, each element of which needs to work in harmony to ensure that every touchpoint meets the customer’s expectations. The only way of achieving this is to orchestrate the different dimensions of your relationship with the customer, whether that is a single small touchpoint or the whole customer experience. From Corporate CX Strategy to alignment of people, processes, tools, data and technology, each element should be part of an unbreakable chain.



Orchestrating the customer-centric mindset

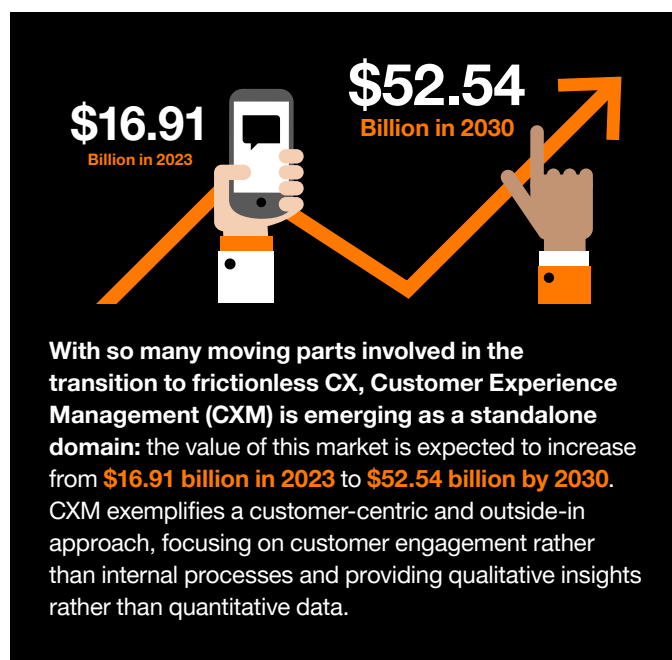
CX is not just a strategy that should reside on paper, it is a philosophy of its own that needs to be shared throughout the organisation. However, the fragmented and sometimes conflicting agendas at play make it easy for CX to become siloed.

CX means different things to different parts of the organisation: the people creating the product or service, those responsible for selling it, and contact centre managers working on the front line may all have different perspectives on the customer experience and conflicting ambitions for the organisation's CX strategy. In particular, marketing departments sometimes overlook their existing assets in the pursuit of the latest innovation: in many cases, the nuggets of information shared with agents in contact centres are never captured and their value is never realised.

Without orchestration, each department may seek incremental gains by implementing point solutions with no real understanding of the impact this will have on the experience overall – and this only serves to create new siloes. These groups need to take a step back and see the value of the puzzle pieces that are not under their direct control – and work with each other to build a true consensus around their CX objectives.

At a minimum, the CX strategy should involve the Operations, Marketing, and IT departments (with budgets aligned accordingly). This will ensure the customer experience becomes a driving force in the organisation, the barometer for success, and a point of referral for decision-making. Also, the C-suite must recognise that they have a key role to play in sponsoring

and driving the necessary collaboration: in the orchestration process, they must make sure that the right musicians get to the venue and know that their job is to work within the conductor's guidance.



CXM starts with gathering customer feedback and assessing the CX maturity of the organisation to establish where the journey must begin, determine the desired destination, and develop a roadmap for getting there.

Voice of the Customer

The first step to customer centricity is identifying your customers' needs. The most directly available source of this information – and the one most likely to be overlooked – is the many interactions they have with your contact centre. A 'Voice of the Customer' programme analyses 100% of these interactions – across all channels including voice – to identify trends and patterns in customer behaviours.

So, you can learn where customer complaints arise – and fix any broken processes. You can identify the prospects most likely to buy and the current customers about to churn, and provide focused campaigns to each group. Identifying best practices and providing targeted coaching to your centre employees will also improve the quality of their engagement with customers. Actionable insights that enhance customer satisfaction and loyalty.



Orchestrating your CX implementation

Orchestration is complex. It not only addresses customer needs and expectations but aligns tools and technology accordingly.

Today, there are 11,000 companies in the MarTech landscape, which can be grouped into four principal CX pillars – Customer Relationship Management, the cloud-based Contact Centre, the Customer Data Platform, and Communication and Collaboration suites. Each of these pillars has its own ecosystem: yet they are also required to interoperate, creating an ‘ecosystem of ecosystems’. While designing and selecting your own unique CX ecosystem, it is helpful to consider the qualities that make up a frictionless customer-centric experience.

Appropriateness

To meet the market’s rising expectations for customer service, human interaction must be provided at the right time and via the right channel for each step in the customer journey. Even if the technical landscape has been properly researched and the best solutions have been implemented, it is impossible to deliver a frictionless experience without orchestrating each customer interaction across all relevant departments. The level of interaction provided should also align with the brand promise.

Personalisation and insight

Customers are more informed and empowered than before. Their familiarity with digital leaders like Amazon, Meta, and Netflix can mean they expect instant communication and personalised experiences. Moreover, consumers know the value that Generative AI (Gen AI) can add and assume that all companies can use it to create more meaningful experiences. Today, hyper-personalisation using real-time data is no longer a nice to have. It is indispensable for a brand to remain in the CX race and retain its competitive advantage.

A cornerstone in providing state-of-the-art customer experience is therefore the ability to collect, store, and use data to gather valuable insights about your customers. For example, Orange Business recently helped a national airline create a more immersive travel experience by consolidating all the sources of customer data with all the points of customer engagement. To do something similar, your CX solution must have access to all resources and information you have about the customer – in whatever data repository that they might be stored. This enables the organisation to customise interactions based on customer preferences and behaviours, leading to more relevant and engaging experiences. Orchestration is paramount when building the technology backbone that will enable this personalisation effort.

Omnichannel

Customers may well start and finish their journey on different channels and using different devices, but they will expect the same experience and the same level of engagement from each of them. Switching from WhatsApp to the contact centre or visiting a shop should be considered as part of the same journey with the information provided in one channel captured and seamlessly reused in the next (to avoid the frustration of repetition). In that sense, Customer Journey Analytics play a big role in shaping the best experiences by helping you to better understand the customer’s likely next move and by identifying and eliminating pain points.

As we move forward, CX will likely become much more “immersive” – ask yourself how your brand should engage with the Fortnite generation. Also, the ubiquity of WhatsApp combined with location awareness will blur the line between physical and digital spaces, for example, in-store staff could be alerted to the fact that a ‘click and collect’ consumer is approaching the retailer, allowing staff to ensure that their product is waiting for them when they arrive.

The role of artificial intelligence

According to Gartner, 83% of enterprises have plans to invest in generative artificial intelligence (Gen AI) or have already done so, and within those organisations, 94% of customer service leaders are at least ‘exploring’ the possibility of implementing a virtual assistant or “copilot”. These augment the human experience and will be invisible to the customer and non-intrusive for the contact centre agent: in much the same way that satnav applications adjust in real-time to changes in our route or traffic conditions, these copilots will provide the relevant information – unprompted and as needed.

However, the growing adoption of AI comes with a host of challenges. Prime among these will be adhering to the new regulations that are already being introduced – the EU passed the world’s first comprehensive AI legislation in March 2024, and much more is doubtless to come. It is also important to implement the right data architectures and remove any inherent bias in your data so good governance will be crucial. Trusted AI will be necessary to provide a robust framework in which your AI applications can operate – but the importance and challenges of implementing this are under appreciated.



Benefits of an orchestrated experience

Done properly, your CX system will enhance customer satisfaction by anticipating the customer's next move and furnishing information accordingly, providing answers before the question even arises.

Because the transaction is seamless and customers have access to the help they need, whenever they run into difficulties, bounce rates will be lower and abandoned shopping carts will become a distant memory. Customers will also have every reason to come back to the site whenever the need arises, so loyalty is enhanced, leading to more repeat business.

So, the key benefit of great CX is enhanced profitability. Customers are willing to pay up to a 16% premium for great service and Customer Lifetime Value increases by between 8 to 14 times. Collectively, this means that companies delivering great CX will see their revenues grow at rates of 4-8% above their market.

However, just as importantly, making the investments necessary to deliver great customer experiences will, in effect, create a platform for growth by simplifying your business and making it more effective.



Eliminating siloed, spaghetti-like architectures opens up the possibility for continuous innovation that builds competitive advantage by allowing you to incorporate cutting-edge features and advancements. It shines a light into the shadows, enhancing convenience and productivity and bringing the flexibility and resilience necessary to adapt to volatile trading conditions.



Your path forward

Today, we are failing our customers. They deserve a customer journey that plays out beautifully but, as we have seen, the majority think that the service delivered by most of the organisations they deal with simply isn't good enough. With consumer expectations of the service experience rising fast – you must now move forward, just to stand still.

And, of course, the job is never really finished: no matter how streamlined your CX ecosystem becomes, there will always be a need to orchestrate the key players and resources in your CX ecosystem in order to remove those frustrating points of friction.

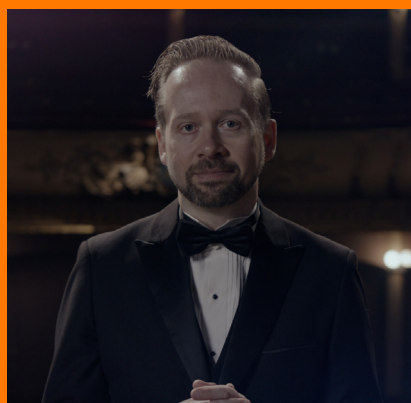
So, closing that CX perception gap is getting harder and cannot be achieved while the different departments that influence the customer experience are operating in siloes. The only way to succeed is to orchestrate your technology and business stakeholders and create harmony across the four pillars of your CX platform. That will serve as a platform for change and the delivery of frictionless experiences – something that will be music to your customers' ears.

About the Orange Business CX Practice

Orange Business is trusted by some of the world's biggest brands to help them communicate more effectively with their customers – we work with nine of the top ten and 40 of the top 50 of Interbrand's best global brands. Our mission is to help businesses deliver best-in-class, frictionless customer experiences by simplifying and orchestrating the CX ecosystem.

Through working at the leading edge of CX technology for the past 15 years, Orange Business has amassed a unique combination of consulting and technical capabilities. Our CX Practice unites our unique and extensive expertise across industry best practices, consumer behaviour, brand activation, system architecture, data integration and technical execution. Because we are not tied to one individual vendor, Orange Business provides unbiased advice to customers, collaborating to deliver compelling, consistent, and compliant experiences that enhance engagement between consumers and brands.

About the author



Richard McCrossan is the Head of Orange Business European Customer and Employee Experience. He leads the go-to-market strategy for Orange Business's European-based clients with a particular focus on digital transformation, customer experience and conversational AI. A story seeker and storyteller with 20 years' experience in the CX industry, his mission is to help organisations differentiate through frictionless customer experiences. He is an execution and outcome-focused strategy and operations leader with hands-on expertise across product, marketing, sales, services, and operations.